

Community Affairs File

# Theatrical Employees Form

Ref. Packet

## First Labor Union in 1914

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

TS DEC 12 1974

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During the winter of 1914, Local 49 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees made an effort to organize the men then employed as motion picture machine operators in its jurisdiction.

Under the guidance and assistance of Local 49 an operators local was formed here in Terre Haute. On January 13, 1915, it was issued an independent charter by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Machine Operators, to be known as Local No. 373.

Charter members were: Trans Brown, Walter Brown, R. R. Dempsey, Ross Harrison, Henry Hirt, L. A. Horning, L. O. Hurt, Wm. Jarvis, H. M. Lindley, Harry Mayer, H. F. Prentice, L. G. Murry, Erwin Murry, W. D. Nesbit, Wm. Prentice, Edward Pullen, R. L. Shaffer and B. Steinhauser. Oak Ruddell is the only living charter member (1970).

The first year the following members were elected to office: L. G. Murry, president; Trans Brown, secretary; W. D. Nesbit, treasurer; and R. M. Harrison (he passed away in 1932), business agent.

By 1933 only four of the original eighteen members held cards in Local 373. They were R. R. Dempsey, B. Steinhauser, Wm. Prentice and H. M. Lindley. The others had left the city or had withdrawn from the trade.

In 1921 the operators of Clinton, Ind., were organized and became members of local 373.

In 1933 the members were:

R. F. Barrett,  
E. F. Brown, C.  
C. Burnett, R.  
R. Dempsey,  
Don Edwards,  
G. H. Fagg, B.  
Steinhauser, H.  
M. Lindley, Oak  
Ruddell, J. J.  
Pruett, L. R.  
Musgrave, Wm.  
Vogel, C. Or-  
man, T. A.  
White, C. W.  
Richey, J. H.  
Carsey, Wm. Prentice, M. B.  
Link, B. A. Whitworth and  
E. J. Kirk.



Dorothy Clark

In 1933 the officers were:  
M. B. Link, pres.; E. J. Kirk,  
vice-pres.; Geo. H. Fagg, sec-  
retary; Everett Brown, treas-  
urer; Wm. Vogel, guard; and  
B. Steinhauser, business agent.

The oldest organization affil-  
iated with the A. F. of L. is  
the International Typograph-  
ical Union, organized in 1852.

The oldest union in Terre  
Haute is the Typographical  
Union No. 76. First organized  
in 1863, it has since been twice  
reorganized. The last reorgan-  
ization took place in 1879, giv-  
ing the union a continuous ex-  
istence of 92 years.

Of the seven members  
granted a charter in 1879, four  
were still living in 1933.

W. C. "Brig" Schuman, who  
was the first superintendent of  
the Union Printer's Home in  
1892, was living in Denver,  
Colorado.

J. W. "Billy" Simpson was  
in Chicago where he had lived  
for many years.

Leslie M. Priest, after living  
in St. Louis for many years,  
was also living in Chicago.

James J. Moorhead (later  
Doctor) was a surgeon at St.  
Anthony's Hospital after prac-  
ticing medicine several years  
in Chicago. He was a native  
Terre Hautean.

The only member who was  
affiliated with all three organ-  
izations of printers, joining  
the first one in 1863, was  
Charles H. Goodwin.

No. 76 in 1933 had three  
members with fifty years con-

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tinuous membership. They were: A. W. "Otto" Maison, the oldest. Frank T. "Fatty" Simpson was a close second as both joined in 1882. Later in that year O. S. "Ollie" McNabb deposited a traveling card.

Capt. A. C. Duddleston, former editor of the SPEC-TATOR, and Fred J. Piepenbrink, former business man-

ager of the city schools, were members of No. 76 at an early date. The union, in 1933, had a number of members who had been such continuously for thirty to forty years.

With the consolidation of the newspapers before 1931, the union adopted the five-day week, which gave some work

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to all its members, although the depression and the consolidation divorced more than one-third of them from jobs. The five-day week has since been made universal by I.T.U.

Terre Haute printers have been more fortunate than most in the matter of wage reduction. The scale in 1933 was but one dollar a week less than in 1929. But the five-day week

reduced the earning capacity about \$9 per week.

Death had taken four of the members during the year 1933. Geo. H. Hebb died aged 83 years; Thomas E. Needham, aged 69; Frank J. Weldele, aged 59 years; and Christopher H. Shaft, aged 87.

Someone should undertake the task of updating the statistics of the last 38 years (1933 to 1971) for both the Printer's Union and the Motion Picture Machine Operators.

The first automobile school—a truck driving training school—class graduated in 1954.



# Gay Nineties Were Not So Gay for Coal Miners

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

The decade called the Gay Nineties may well have been gay enough for Andrew Carnegie, who was then making more than \$23,000,000 a year without having to pay taxes on a penny of it, but whether the Nineties were in fact gay for most Americans is a serious question.

The great majority of people earned less than what would be the equivalent, in purchasing power, of an income of \$2,000 a year today, eking out a marginal existence under conditions we would now call insufferable. Not only was there an Oriental distance between the rich and the poor, but it was rapidly increasing.

In the 1890s coal miners were working ten hours per day. They were struggling to build an organization, trying to raise the wage scale and better the working conditions of the miners. Many of them did not live to see the job completed.

Eighty-two years ago, Philip H. Penna and his colleagues led District No. 11 into the Amalgamation of 1890. On January 24th of that year, the miners of the Knights of Labor and the miners of the National Progressive Union banded together and formed the present United Mine Workers of America.

Adopted at the first convention were resolutions stating that all machine-mined coal shall not be based at a lower rate than ten cents per ton below pick-mined coal and the scale for one governed the other.

Officers elected were: John Kane, president; Joseph Dunkerly, vice-president; Harvey St. John, secretary-treasurer, and William Winterbottom, P. H. Penna and Frank Lockhart, board members. By acclamation Mr. Penna was elected Kane's alternate to the Columbus, Ohio, national convention that year. John Kane became the first International Board member from District No. 11, and was editor of the Journal 1891-1896, and International Vice-President in 1897 at the time of his death.

At the Indiana Miner's Convention held in Terre Haute on Feb. 25, 1890, P. H. Penna was appointed Organizer for the UMWA by the national officers. He presided at the Miner's National Convention held in Pittsburgh, April 6, 1891, and was National Vice President in 1892.



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In 1892, the price set for a day's work in the mine for practical men was 21 1/9 cents per hour; for pick mining, 70 cents per ton; for mining with Harrison or Sargent Machines, including cutting, drilling and shooting and loading, 52 1/2 cents per ton; for mining with the Legg machine was 13 cents per ton for rooms and 15 cents per ton for entries. Coal miners were paid twice a month, not later than the 10th and 25th of each month.

In 1894, special conventions were held in Terre Haute to consider a reduction on mining prices and the serious condition of affairs in the Clinton Field, owing to a lack of work there. In May the mines were on strike again.

In the Northern Field, in 1896, they were on strike from May 1 to Dec. 1 and were informed of officers of District Organization to return to the mines and get the best wage scale they could possibly get. These were the miners in the Rosedale, Clinton and other nearby mining fields.

They went back to work for 47 cents per ton pick work and the day wage was whatever they could get at the mines. They went to work at 7:00 a.m. and worked until 5:00 p.m., taking one hour off for lunch. They worked under

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those conditions until June, 1897. The men held a mass meeting at Rosedale and men came from Fontanet, Lyford, Coxville, Coal Bluff and Mecca. The men quit work without any call from the officers of the Union and when they went back to work they got 50 cents per ton for pick coal and in 1898, when they reorganized, the day wage was cut from \$1.80 per day to \$1.75 in order to strike an average with the competitive field that was organized.

Whenever possible, grievances were settled without striking. In many cases the operator and the miners settled their own cases and in some cases they would agree on some disinterested party for conciliation.

## Eight-hour Day

The eight-hour day was established in 1898. From 1920 to 1928 miners enjoyed a wage scale of \$1.08 per ton for pick mine run coal and a basic day wage of \$7.50 for eight hours.

P. H. Penna, "The Grand Old Man of the Coal Industry," while working as a miner in the block coal fields of Indiana was active in organizing the mine workers. He was one of the pioneers of the UMW and served in many ways. He went from International Organizer in 1890 to International President in 1895-6.

Penna was a dynamic leader and was successful in solidifying the rank and file of the UMW into a strong organization. He left the UMW of 1897 and assisted in organizing the Indiana Bituminous Coal Operators Association. In 1898 he advocated the eight-hour day for the mine workers. For meritorious service to his Union, he was one of the few men given a Life Membership in the UMWA by the International Convention.

Mr. Penna served as Secretary of the Indiana Bituminous Coal Operators Assoc. from 1902 until 1928. A leader of the operators in every joint conference of the Central Competition Field, he was recognized as an authority on the coal industry and collective bargaining and his advice was sought and accepted by leaders in industry throughout the United States.

John A. Templeton was born in Scotland in 1860, came to the United States in 1881, and worked in the block coal mines near Cardonia, and Clay City. He moved to Island City, south of Linton about

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# Readers Respond to Plea For Miners Picnic Data

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By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Some time ago I appealed for help in establishing the date of the very first Miner's Picnic. Many people responded with letters and phone calls furnishing much interesting information and made this column possible.

According to Mary Thomas Pugh (Mrs. Edward Pugh), the daughter of coal miner John Thomas, the first picnic must have been in 1915 or 1916 because she was a small child either five or six years old. Her baby sister won second prize in the baby contest.

John Thomas had worked at mines at Shirkie, West Terre Haute, Liggett, in Illinois, and helped sink the Black Hawk Mine. He began coal mining at the tender age of twelve years when mule drivers earned ten cents an hour. Then he worked for \$1.50 a day, ten hours a day, nine dollars a week for a six-day week. In later years he became ill from being exposed to so much dynamite smoke from the blasing in the mines.

Mrs. Pugh remembered that each miner must have his dues paid up in the local union before receiving five free tickets per child in his family. These tickets, worth five cents in those days, were good for lemonade, an ice cream cone or a merry-go-round ride, the only ride available then.

Mrs. Joseph Minar, 2645 North 25th St., remembered the date of the first Miner's Picnic very well. Her son was born that day and consequently she could not attend. Since the early picnics were family affairs, no one in her family got to go.

Another retired coal miner who lives in Seelyville told of having a son born the following morning after the family attended the Aug. 13, 1921 picnic.



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An 81-year-old retired coal miner remembered a miner's picnic in 1914. It was a basket dinner at the old fairgrounds near the west part of the grounds where the original buildings once stood. In 1915 a new baby prevented family attendance.

Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, Rosedale, Ind., wrote me about the Miner's Picnic held at the Old Fair Grounds, Wabash and Brown avenues, in 1915. She told how the families took their dinners in baskets, spread a table cloth on the grass, and sat on the ground to eat bountiful meals. She remembered there sack races for the children, a motorcycle race, and a speaker in the afternoon.

William Spence, who had worked at Coal Valley Mine, told how the family checked their picnic basket at a tent, and when they went to pick up the basket each family got a watermelon. Small families received small watermelons, while large families received large watermelons or sometimes more than one.

John Harris, a retired coal miner living in Brazil, Ind., remembered the 1917 Miner's Picnic held at the Old Fairgrounds where the Stadium stood later.

A Mr. White remembered a miner's picnic before 1919 which was held at Overpeck's Grove, a mile and a quarter north of Clinton on the Fair-

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view Road. He remembers a large grove of oak trees, the fact that there was no water nearby, that there was a very large crowd, and that a Mr. Van Scott was in charge. He thought this picnic might possibly be for just one local union.

Delbert Cottrell recalled when he was a small boy in either 1913 or 1914 his father was a coal miner and took the family on open interurban cars to Chelsea Park at Sandford, Ind. He remembers a big skating rink and an outside dance floor for square dancing. This was probably another of the early picnics held by individual local unions before the combined Miner's Picnic became an annual event.

Charles F. Britton served on the committee either in 1915 or 1916. The picnic was held the first Sunday in August after the payday on the tenth of the month. It was held at the Old Fairgrounds by four different locals in the Clinton area — Coal Valley, Grant, Jackson Hill No. 6, and Shirkevillie.

The first two years they had baseball contests and Jackson Hill No. 6 won the first year. There was dancing in the old Pavillion.

Mr. Britton told how Paul Kuhn leased the grounds for horse training. William Galloway, father of Frank Galloway, was the originator of the combined Miner's Picnic. The men on the committee for planning the event met at Collett Park. Each man in each local was assessed twenty-five cents for expenses. There was a stile and open gate on Shaul Avenue. Anton Hulman, Sr., Tony's father, always donated bags of peanuts to each child attending.

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In 1918 about \$700 of the proceeds from the concessions was donated to the Red Cross and the World War I needs.

Frank Galloway told me the Miner's Picnic was always held on the first Friday, Saturday and Sunday after the first payday in August. Up to 1940 it was only held on two days. The publicity for the 1940 mentions that this was the 24th annual event, so we can figure from that the very first Miner's Picnic was held in 1916. Mr. Galloway stated that the "train committee" of the north field were responsible for the first event. After that the committee was chosen from members of the various local unions in District No. 11.

I am grateful to Mr. Galloway for a photograph of the first committee. Most of the men need to be identified, so anyone knowing those on the first committee please stop in the Historical Museum and look at the picture.



# Unions key part of city's past

With the approach of Labor Day, we're reminded again of the fact that Terre Haute was at one time in its history highly organized in labor union activities.

A brief history of the local Tailors' Union was written in 1910 by D. L. Bengston, a member of Local No. 31.

He told how in the beginning of the 16th century, tailoring workers were skilled craftsmen and in Europe bore title of "The Knights of the Needle".

The men were organized for mutual protection, but principally for promoting and teaching the trade as an art.

In the United States, the first unions were formed in Philadelphia, New York and Pittsburgh. The first national convention was held in Chicago in 1884.

In Terre Haute, the first branch of the Tailor's Union was formed about that time, but after a few years of active work, the local branch ceased to exist.

It did not die, however, because in 1899 Local No. 31 Journeymen Tailor's Union of America was organized at a meeting called by General Organizer Thomas Sweeney on Nov. 13, 1899.

Sixteen names were signed on the charter, and the following officers elected: Carl Ekmark, president; Albert Burget, vice-president; Christopher Mahler, treasurer; Joseph Johnson, finan-

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*Speaking*

*By Dorothy Clark*

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cial secretary; Harry C. Burget, recording secretary, and William Gauger, sergeant-at-arms.

In the spring of 1900, Local No. 31 declared a strike because some firms refused to sign a bill of prices that the Journeymen had agreed upon as a just demand. The strike was soon settled in "a manner reported to be satisfactory to both sides."

## BREWERS UNION

Another defunct local union of Terre Haute was the formerly powerful Brewers' Local No. 85. It was a pioneer group along with the Beer Bottlers Local No. 288, the Beer Drivers Local No. 135, and the Brewery and Ice Plant Workers No. 286.

The Brewers Union was born of the Brewers Mutual Aid Society, which was formed in Cincinnati in 1852. As early as 1850, an attempt was made to organize a Brewers' Protective Association.

The labor movement attracted attention of brewery workers who were toiling about 18 hours a day. There was so much evident dis-

satisfaction that brewery owners became uneasy and gave them a slight increase in wages.

On Dec. 28, 1879, the first Brewers Union was born in Cincinnati. It was called the "Brauer Gesellen Union"

## TEAMSTERS

From a nucleus of seven members when it was organized April 4, 1908, to 110 members on Labor Day, 1913, was the report of Teamsters' Union No. 144. This union was organized by Organizer Farrell of Chicago, Ill.

In 1913 the officers were A. R. Johnson, president; Robert Cane, vice-president; Jacob Reder, secretary-treasurer; and H.D. Roseman, recording secretary.

## GLASS BLOWERS

Branch No. 80, Terre Haute Glass Bottle Blowers' Association, was organized in September, 1900, with a membership of 33.

The membership increased rapidly when the North Baltimore Company started their No. 1 furnace on Jan. 1, 1901; Turner Brothers and North Baltimore, one furnace each in 1902, followed by the build-

ing of the Root Glass Company plant.

The several firms increased their plants to a total of eight furnaces, making the local union the second largest membership in the United States.

In 1913 the officers were John Chamberlain, president; Lewis D. Bush, recording secretary; Joseph H. Pote, financial secretary; William H. Wallace, treasurer; Edward Smith, conductor; William Edwards, J.S.S.; Harry Curry, U.S.S.; John Chamberlain, Martin Fauberg and Victor Crowthers, trustees. They were affiliated with the A.F. of L.

## TYPO AUXILIARY

Woman's Auxiliary No. 50 to Typographical Union No. 76 was organized January, 1906. The meetings were held the third Wednesday of each month.

All wives, mothers, unmarried daughters, and unmarried sisters of members of No. 76 were eligible for membership. The purpose was to promote socialibility, to render assistance in time of sickness or trouble, and to push the union label by purchasing clothes and household items bearing the label.

In 1913 the officers were Mrs. William D. Eaton, president; Mrs. E. P. Beadle, vice-president; Mrs. A. G. Slemons, secretary and treasurer, and Mrs. Lawrence Tester, chaplain.



# Cold, hard facts on coal

Community Affairs File

Historically

Speaking

By Dorothy Clark



A century ago, Terre Haute had few superiors in commercial and manufacturing advantages. Topographically it had no rivals with its beautiful location on the high bluffs of the Wabash river affording it good drainage and an unlimited supply of water.

Coal and water, the great steam producing elements, could be had at minimum cost, and eight railroads delivered raw materials and carried away the products of her factories.

Lots for the homes of the laboring classes could be had at prices within the reach of every industrious family.

Surrounded by an agricultural region of unrivalled productivity, with unlimited supplies of the best coal in the world at her doorstep, with railroads penetrating the best timber and coal regions on the continent, Terre Haute presented to the capitalist and manufacturer an inviting field promising the most abundant returns.

Indiana with its inexhaustible beds of coal, particularly the superior block coal, was the prime essential in attracting new industry one hundred years ago. With the energy crisis at hand, Indiana's coal is again a prime factor.

In 1878, the coal area in Indiana was about 6,500 square miles, equal to more than half the coal area of Great Britain, and one-twentieth that of the entire United States.

Taking the coal veins shown to exist by the official geological survey, and leaving out all thin veins, estimating only those of three feet and over in thickness, and within workable depth, and then deducting one-half of what remains for loss and waste, there is left 1,812,096,000,000 cubic feet of coal.

Seventy pounds was the legal weight of a bushel of coal in Indiana. The average weight of a cubic foot of Indiana coal was about eighty pounds. This would figure out to be 2,071,966,757.143 bushels.

Estimating it to be worth one cent per bushel in the mine, its value would be \$20,719,667,571, a sum sufficient to buy all the real and personal property in the United States at its assessed value in 1870, and then leave enough to pay the national debt three times over. It was a sum sufficient a century ago to build a narrow gauge railroad costing \$10,000 per mile, 2,071,966 miles in length, or 83 times around the world.

At that time, the price of coal in the north of England was \$5 50 per ton. The English ton was 2,240 lbs., equal to 32 bushels of our measure, and this would be 17½ cents per bushel Indiana measure, and is double the cost in this city. So, on the question of cheap fuel in 1878, we could compete with English manufacturers.

At ten cents per bushel in the market, the value of the coal in Indiana would have been \$207,196,675,710 or 14½ times the assessed value of all the property of the U.S. in 1870.

The coal, if sold at ten cents per bushel, would have paid the national debt then one hundred times, or would have bought all the real and personal property in Indiana nearly 300 times.

The coal in Sullivan county, estimated at one cent per bushel in the mines, was nearly double the assessed value of all the

property in the State of Indiana. Were this coal consumed in manufacturing, and a profit of one cent per bushel made and deposited in the State Treasury, the amount would be 1½ times all the property in the U.S. in 1870.

Mining 100 bushels per day each, it would have employed the entire male population of the state, between 21 and 45 years, for 180 years, and their wages at three cents per bushel would be 93 times the value of all the property in the State of Indiana.

If loaded on railroad cars of ten tons, or 250 bushels each, 8,287,867,028 cars would have been required. If the cars were each 30 feet long, it would have made a train nearly 47 millions of miles in length, or 1,880 times around the world. Were the train to run night and day without stopping for a moment, the last car would be 265 years arriving at the starting point.

A century ago, a favorite trick of speakers was to expound on their subject using the above method of unreal facts and figures. Without a calculator, it must have presented laborious computations to produce the figures to point out the immensity of our coal resources then. It was estimated that Indiana could supply the world for over 300 years, supply Great Britain for 500 years, and the U.S. for 1,525 years.

There have been some changes. Instead of 70 lbs. its now 80 lbs. for the legal weight of a bushel of Indiana coal. The average weight of a cubic foot is now 50 lbs. instead of 80 lbs. Since 1913, dry measure is illegal in Indiana. Packages must carry the net weight.

Supposing a miner could have mined four tons a day in 1878, then a pound of coal would yield 388 times the manual labor required to mine it; 18 lbs. of coal is equal to the labor of an able-bodied man for eight hours, and two bushels of coal, costing twenty cents in the market, would yield as much motive power as the hard labor of a man for a week.

Taking one acre of Sullivan county coal then, at 100 bushels per day it would take a miner 15 years, and yet the coal when mined would afford a power equal to the continuous labor of one man for over 5,000 years. The coal in Sullivan county alone was supposed to have been equal to the laboring power of one million men for 1,555 years, and the coal of the state to the labor of 26,000,090 men for over 1,000 years. What vast forces were slumbering in our 6,500 square miles of coal, awaiting the touch of the miner's pick!

Imagine the machines, the tools, the locomotives, the railroad iron, the wares and merchandise which could be produced by the consumption of this vast body of coal, the power it would yield, and the labor it would employ, and then we begin to see its immense value and importance to the Indiana of 1878.

One hundred years ago it was believed that iron ore produced near Terre Haute would result in the making of pig-iron and steel comparable to Pittsburgh. This proved to be a dream, along with the cotton mills and other huge manufacturing plants.

Terre Haute grew in population by nearly a thousand a year until 1870 when the great influx stopped slowed down. According to U.S. Census figures, Terre Haute grew from 3,572 in 1850, to 8,594 in 1860, to 16,103 in 1870, and 19,265 in 1876.

Of the last figure, 9,319 were white males, 9,575 were white females, 181 colored males, and 190 colored females, a little under two percent.

Those who dreamed of a huge manufacturing metropolis were disappointed. Those of us who enjoy a smaller college-oriented city with varied small industry are content.

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# Historically Speaking

## From first plumber, trade grew to 1,800-member union

T-S Valley 9-6-81  
By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Terre Haute's very first plumber and gas-fitter was David W. Watons, born in County Armagh, Ireland, in 1820. He was educated for the ministry at the Presbyterian College of Belfast, but preferred another calling and learned the trade of plumbing.

Watson came to New York and then to Terre Haute in January, 1856, at the invitation of the men responsible for the erection of the first gas plant here. At that time, there was no one qualified to do gas-fitting, so he established his business here and became closely involved with the development of the city.

Watson opened the first plumbing and gas-fitting establishment in Terre Haute on north Fourth Street between Wabash and Cherry streets. Later he built a frame business building at the corner of Third and Mulberry streets, with the shop on the ground floor and his living quarters on the second floor, a common arrangement in those days.

Business prospered, and in 1862 he built at 634 Main (Wabash Avenue), the former location of the Star newspaper. This was a brick structure with a stone-front, the most pretentious business building in the city at that time. It was also the first stone-front business house here.

In 1868, Watson engaged in the ice business as a sideline, but unfortunately contracted rheumatism and had to quit that venture. He continued the plumbing and gas-fitting business until his death in 1883.

His son, John C. Watson, carried on the business, and in 1885 the firm of D.W. Watson's Sons Company was formed. In 1906 the firm opened an elaborate showroom on south Seventh Street.

Frank Prox, who came to Terre Haute in 1869, was another pioneer in the plumbing trade. In 1875, he formed a partnership with D.W. Watson to do gas-fitting, copersmithing and plumbing, known as Watson and Prox. Two years later he went into business for

himself at 677 Wabash Ave., later moving to 17-25 N. Ninth St.

Expanding still further, Frank Pox formed a partnership with W.R. McKeen and John F. Brinkman. The new company purchased the Phoenix Foundry and Machine Company in 1890 and erected additional larger buildings occupying an entire block on north Ninth Street.

In 1905, Prox became the sole owner of the business. He was an inventor of steam and hot water appliances of great value. His son, Anton Prox, had learned the plumbing trade in his father's shop, and after several years in the trade, he became associated with his father in the plumbing supply business on Wabash Avenue, later moving to north Eighth Street.

When the elder Prox retired, he disposed of his business interests to Burget. The firm became known as Prox and Burget Company, the largest of its kind in Terre Haute. Anton Prox died in 1922.

Until his death in 1957, 81-year-old John Dilg was the oldest

plumber in Terre Haute. Born here in 1876, the son of Peter Dilg who was a carpenter for the Pennsylvania Railroad, young Dilg began his apprenticeship with D.W. Watson and Sons.

His three-year apprenticeship began at the low wage of ten cents an hour, graduating to a journeyman's wages of \$2.50 for a ten-hour day. When he married Elizabeth Kerner in 1899, he was earning \$7.50 a week.

When Dilg began the plumber's trade, there were several modern homes in Terre Haute. The big difference was that in the early days of plumbing lead pipe was used, and a man had to be a real mechanic to work with lead. Joining the lead sections of pipe with solder was ticklish, painstaking work. Later iron pipe was used, and now plastic and copper tubing is selected.

The plumber's union suffered with growing pains and staged many strikes lasting from three to eight months. During these local strikes, many union plumbers would leave Terre Haute temporarily to find

work elsewhere.

Dilg worked on the Claypool Hotel in Indianapolis, in Chicago, French Lick and during World War I in Louisville, Ky. Locally he worked on the Hotel Deming and Terre Haute House plumbing installations. Before his retirement, he was the city's plumbing inspector.

In 1950, Local Union No. 157 presented life membership cards and insignia rings to Louis C. Jentz, initiated in 1896 and a charter member; Dilg who was initiated in 1898, and Albert Born, initiated in 1903. Fred Von Eute, another veteran plumber, remembered his first job was installing the plumbing at the Union Depot.

Local Union N. 157 was organized first in 1894, but lost its charter when the membership dropped below seven members. Again in 1896, a group of seven or eight men obtained a charter, and the membership has grown to approximately 1,800 at the present time. The Local covers a large territory comprising 17 counties in Indiana and six counties in Illinois.

## Prevent *Do-It-Yourself* Disasters

**W**ith more householders turning to fixing things around the house to save money, home accidents are mounting. Many of these could be prevented, says the National Safety Council, if do-it-yourselfers used some simple protective equipment. Here, *what to use when*.

**Goggles.** Either safety glasses or goggles (cost \$2-\$12) should be worn to protect your eyes from chemicals, dust, or particles when:

- Working with potentially hazardous chemicals such as varnish and paint remover.
- Painting overhead, especially ceilings, when drips or splatter from a roller might get into your eyes, or when using spray paint.
- Chipping mortar, cement, or plaster preparatory to filling cracks or doing repair work.

**Masks.** Disposable porous paper masks (about \$2.50 for a set of five) filter out particles harmful to breathe. Use them when:

- Sanding wood or plaster, or sweeping up dust after a repair is made.
- Sawing or drilling asbestos board or installing fiberglass insulation. Note: These masks do *not* keep out toxic vapors. For exposure to these, you will need a *respirator* (about \$30, sometimes available for rent).
- Gloves.** Neoprene or rubber gloves (\$3-\$5) should be worn when:
  - Handling house or garden pesticides, or when pruning or working on shrubs or trees that have been sprayed.
  - Mixing dyes or handling material that has been freshly dyed and is wet.
  - Working with paint of varnish

remover, especially when removing gunk after the surface has softened.

- Rubbing grout into the cracks between wall tiles by hand.
- Using oven cleaner, especially when wiping it off.

**Knee pads.** Cushioned rubber knee pads (\$4-\$7 the pair) save a lot of soreness and even prevent injury in many jobs, such as painting baseboards, setting floor tile, refinishing floors, etc.

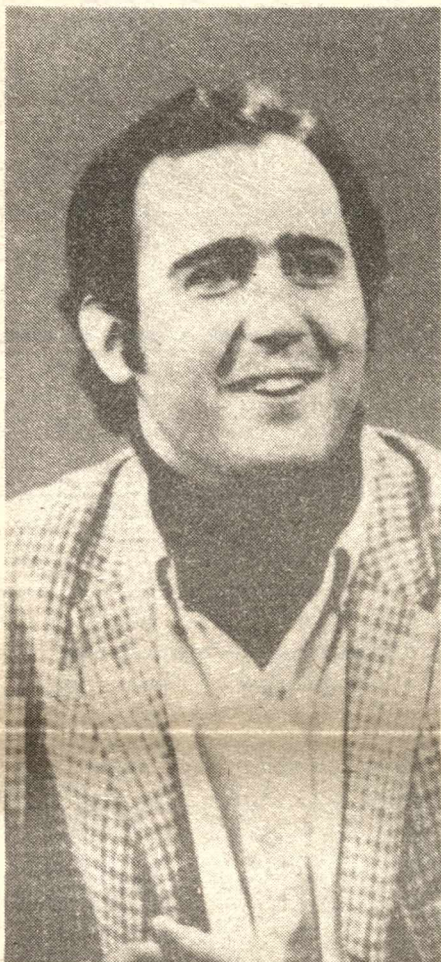
**Handles.** Sometimes you must use a stepladder when painting, but for ceilings and highwalls, use a long-handled roller — it's safer. Roller handles are available with threads in the butt end into which you can screw a floor scrub-brush handle. Even longer sectioned extension handles are so available. (If you must use a stepladder, don't reach too far out and topple off!) ■



# BETWEEN THE LINES

## THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY...

By Josie



**Q.** I was eating in a New York City delicatessen recently, and I could have sworn that Andy Kaufman from "Taxi" was working behind the counter. Is his comedy career going sour? K. Johansen, Wayne, Penn.

**A.** That really was Andy Kaufman working at Wolf's Deli on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. Kaufman, who is well-known for doing outrageous things in his comedy act such as reading "The Great Gatsby" onstage or inviting the entire audience out for milk and cookies, thought his waiter work seemed perfectly reasonable. He says he needs the money. He also says that he gets ideas from his customers for comedy routines.

Kaufman wasn't the only well-known face working tables in NYC this summer. Yankee relief pitcher Ron Davis was on the night shift at Oren and Aretsky's and Al Pacino was moonlighting at a small Italian restaurant getting a feel for his role in the upcoming film "The Pope of Greenwich Village."

**Q.** In "Superman II" Margot Kidder's eyes were bugging out all the time. What was she trying to do, look coy? G. Reston, Cleveland, Oh.

**A.** Margot affected the wide-eyed look because she couldn't see. One day she put her contact lenses in backward and they hurt her eyes so the doctor told her not to wear them until her eyes healed. Without them, however, she's so blind she



practically walks into walls, so her eye-popping look was her way of seeing just enough to get her through scenes. The director liked it, though, and asked her to keep it even after her eyeballs were back to normal. For the rest of the filming, her contacts were outlawed.



**Q.** My husband and I were camping in the mountains recently and I thought I saw Toni Tennille and a group of women at a nearby campsite. Could it have been? T. Reventlow, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

**A.** What big eyes you have! Last year Toni came up with the idea of going off into the woods with a band of female buddies to get back to nature and get away from husbands. They had such a great time that they called their group WITS (Women in the Sierras) and returned to the mountains of California for one week in August. This year, 16 intrepid souls ventured out, including Sarah Purcell of "Real People" and three L.A. Dodger's wives.

**Q.** Mick Jagger and his ex-wife Bianca seemed to have had a nasty divorce. Since they run in the same circles, what happens if they accidentally meet in public? F. Sloane, Corpus Christi, Tex.

**A.** Since they hit a lot of the same discos and night spots, these two fast-livers do occasionally run into each other, but the reception could hardly be described as cordial. Recently at New York's Xenon disco, Bianca and her escort bumped into Mick and two of his friends. Bianca tried to stay on the other side of the room but he insisted on dancing right in front of her table. She gave in, left the club and jumped in a cab to beat a hasty retreat.

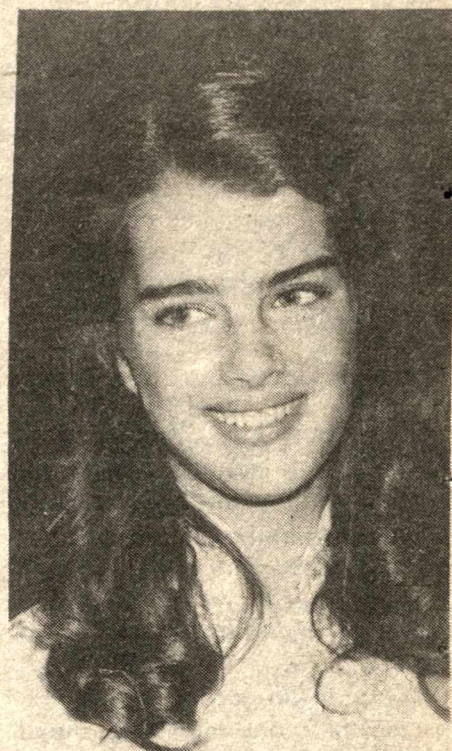
Anything you'd like to know about prominent personalities? Write: Josie, SUNDAY WOMAN magazine, 235 E. 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017. Sorry, we can't answer any letters individually.

**Q.** My friend and I were having an argument about how Lauren Bacall got discovered. What's your version? S. Frederick, Birmingham, Ala.

**A.** She was discovered by film director Howard Hawks' wife, Slim, a former model. Bacall's face appeared on the cover of Harper's Bazaar in 1943 and Slim told Hawks to sign her. Trusting his wife's instincts, he signed Bacall without even giving her a screentest. However, because she was only 17, Hawks' was afraid to use her until, in his words, "she could be taken seriously as an actress." At 20, she was ready and he cast her in "To Have and Have Not" opposite Humphrey Bogart. The rest, of course is cinema history.

**Q.** I usually love Brooke Shields but "Endless Love" was boring! There was such a build-up for that movie — what happened? H. Kemmerling, Kenosha, Wis.

**A.** As director Franco Zeffirelli explains it, "Brooke will be a good actress if she only works harder at it." In fact, Brooke wasn't Zeffirelli's first choice for the role of Jade; he wanted to cast two complete unknowns as he'd done in "Romeo and Juliet." He ran into a snag with his original casting choices, however. Martin Hewitt, who was parking cars at a restaurant in Pasadena, Calif., before Zeffirelli cast him, was fine, but the girl who was cast couldn't learn her lines and was fired. So he turned to a professional, Ms. Shields.





# Life below ground

Dorothy Clark

Ts JAN 26 1986

Community Affairs File

## Hard work, superstition characterized mining

Tragic accidents have plagued local coal mines since the early days. Stories of explosions were well remembered, but explosions were not the only dangers miners feared. Roof falls were the greatest single cause of death in the shaft and slope coal mines.

Other hazards to the miners were inhalation of dust (which later caused black lung disease), explosions caused by faulty shot-firing, and, later, electrical fires and smoke, high voltage and water, slick tracks, faulty brakes, derailments, and even inexperience and carelessness by individual miners, either too young, too old or ailing and drunk. The buddy system was used to help prevent accidents and to insure that no miner went down alone.

After each shot-firing, experienced miners looked for possible loose rocks that might fall when the coal was moved out. Loading coal was the name of the game, which was getting paid by the carload hauled out of the entries to the tippie. Those who got in too big a hurry to make another dollar sometimes overlooked the safety factor.

Several feet of rock, weighing several tons, would kill a man instantly. Smaller rocks would result in broken bones, bruises and missing limbs. Almost every coal-mining family could tell of the loss

### Historically speaking



Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

By Dorothy Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

of a brother, son or husband.

Much has been written about the coal miners, but the story of their wives has been neglected. Particularly in the days of the coal camps and small mining towns, wives had a difficult time coping with the living conditions and with the fear and mixed emotions of seeing their husbands go down in the mine.

One woman described the company house she lived in as "a plain little house, with four rooms, no water in the house, and an outside toilet." For heat they used coal in a grate with an old-fashioned chimney running up through it. In cold weather, they burned a lot of coal and used an awful lot of quilts.

The women kept busy with the usual household chores, taking

care of children, etc., but occasionally they'd get together to quilt and enjoy the gossip. They all faced the reality that their husbands ran the risk every shift of being killed or maimed. Unless a woman had ever gone down in a coal mine, she couldn't imagine the darkness and the scariness of the long hours. No matter how safe and mechanical it became later, the women had the same fears for their men.

People learned about the company store when they heard Tennessee Ernie Ford sing about it. Miners and their families didn't have a choice. They could either trade at the company store, or they didn't have a job. Trading with scrip or metal tokens, the mining company had the advantage. Many miners realized it wasn't a place to live, just to survive.

The pick-and-shovel and wheelbarrow method was still used as late as World War I. The miners used picks, shovels, mattocks, scrapers and mules to remove the coal from the face of the opening.

When they reached the seam of coal, the miners had to loosen the coal in the seam by blasting or "shooting" it with dynamite. Using a breast auger, "a crank type auger where you placed each hand on the back with a crooked crank-like and steel plate that you placed across your thighs and put the auger in

that breast plate. And then you pushed and cranked until you got a hole approximately six feet deep."

A stick and a half of dynamite was placed in that hole with a piece of fuse and a cap on the end. After firing this shot in the middle, the miner would fire one on each rib. That effort would provide 22 to 25 tons of coal.

To make it easier, some mines had shot-firers. They would drill three top holes and three bottom holes, using a stick of dynamite in each. All the fuses were lit at once and then the man would yell warning and run out.

The augers were replaced with electric drills. Instead of dynamite and black powder the miners had electric caps with wires hooked to a battery. The problem was still how to get the coal out of the mine. Before 1900 it was hauled out with mules with drivers.

After a time in the mines, the mules would become blind, but were sure-footed and worked hard. Ponies were used in some mines. Mechanized mining got the animals out of the mines. Canaries were used to detect deadly methane gas until safety lamps were invented.

Early miners remembered working 14 hours to make \$3 in the late 1920s. The coal-loader got paid 46 cents for each car he loaded. One

miner recalled he got paid \$3.47 for an eight-hour day in 1919. After World War I it kept dropping down to 32 cents, but he had loaded coal for 20 cents a ton and shot his own coal.

In 1947 wages went to 90 cents an hour with longer work hours. By 1969, wages had reached \$2 to \$3 an hour, and by 1979 were \$10 to \$12 an hour. One old miner had worked from 1917 until 1958. He told of mines with bad air, dust and water up to his knees to wade in loading coal. Sometimes the air was so bad, his carbide lamp would go out. Coming out of the mine his pantlegs would freeze before he could get to the bathhouse.

Coal miners, the old-timers, were a superstitious lot. They all knew about the rats in the mines. If the air got too bad in one section, the rats would move to another part of the mine. The miner's lunch bucket — with the dessert on top, sandwiches in the center compartment and the drinking water in the large bottom section — was kept nearby. Many men fed the rats to keep them nearby, because they knew they were in danger when the rats disappeared.

The older coal miners knew what the dark coal mines were — miles under the hills and valleys where the sun never shines and the rain never falls.



# It was a coal day in Terre Haute

## Mining industry set back by flatboats

*Clark, Dorothy*  
The mining of coal was probably chief among Terre Haute and Vigo County industries in earlier times, but there is a noticeable gap in its history compared to the early 1900s.

It is recorded that explorers traveling by the Wabash River route reported seeing rich veins of coal along the high banks in several places. This was of interest to any trades or manufacturing firms who used coal, such as blacksmiths and ironworks.

It is also recorded that Daniel Dayton Condit, who came to town in 1831, and W.A. Thompson of New York, sometimes recorded as Jacob Thompson, were partners in the first coal mining project ever operated out of Terre Haute.

On June 4, 1832, the Wabash Courier was full of the welcome news that a bridge was being planned over the Wabash River at Terre Haute. The problem was the people living in what was called the Upper Wabash had the idea that a bridge could not be built without destroying steamboat navigation above Terre Haute. Other more enlightened folks believed that this idea was totally preposterous and that the bridge would be built, irregardless.

The newspaper of June 21, 1832, advertised "coal diggers wanted immediately, Persons to dig coal, and several flat boats, for the conveyance of coal to New Orleans. Employment and favorable contracts for building may be had by applying to Thompson & Condit."

The efforts of these two men and the results are almost laughable

### Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

now, but nevertheless, they started the coal industry here. In 1838 they selected a site for a surface or "strip" mine on the high bluffs several miles north of Terre Haute, probably across the river from the present Elks Club at Fort Harrison.

Their plan was daring and extremely hazardous, but they were young, and this was the first idea of the sort ever put into even partial operation here.

They planned to mine the coal, load it on large flat-bottom barges, float it down the Wabash to the Ohio River, down the Mississippi River to New Orleans where it was to be marketed.

Barges were built, the coal was mined and loaded, and the trip started down river. The barges got as far as about two miles, it is recorded, when the water level fell and left them stranded. The project was given up, evidently in disgust at the whimsical treatment accorded by the Wabash River and its rapid fluctuations.

Giving up coal mining as a bad proposition, the two men opened a store at Third and Wabash, which also failed after a brief period of success.

Their coal mining venture, however, was remembered by other more knowledgeable and cautious souls who started to develop the coal lands in the nearby territory. The market was there.

Earliest records of any extensive mining show that a mine was opened on the Vandalia Railroad track near the Vigo-Clay county line about 1880 and was worked a number of years before being abandoned. Little mining operations sank shafts or did surface-mining in Vigo and all surrounding counties in the Wabash Valley.

Before that time, one or two little surface mines west of the river had been opened and some coal shipped in to Terre Haute from them. Among the earliest coal operators of importance were members of the Pyre family and the Erlish brothers, who opened mines on the Vandalia tracks.

The Wabash Courier of Feb. 14, 1849, furnished the citizens of Terre Haute their first knowledge of the discovery of gold in California. Large quantities of gold, according to a St. Louis source, had been discovered in the Rocky Mountains.

Interest in local coal mining took a back seat to this great excitement. Men could pick up gold nuggets as large as hens' eggs and pan enough gold dust to fill gunny

sacks too heavy to carry. Why should miners risk life and limb going down in the dark, dirty coal mines and work hard for little pay?

The Gold Rush to California was on. The Express printed a letter in 1850 from Fort Kearney which stated that 2,754 wagons, averaging four and a half men to the wagon, had passed that point between April 13 and May 13. One of the migrants was a miner from Scotland who trundled his own wheelbarrow along the overland route.

Fontanet, in Nevins Township in the northern part of Vigo County, is a good example of a bustling coal-mining town, turned into a ghost town compared to what it was in 1889 when the population stood at 1,500. King Coal could make towns, and it could break them.

The Coal Bluff Mining Co. founded by the Talley brothers operated two deep-shaft mines. Three of their mines were at nearby Coal Bluff.

Some of those early mines were the Minshall, Plymouth, Diamond, Mary, Lotten, Old Star, Union, Monkey, Old Town Mine, Peerless (also called the Moses) and the Victor.

With the coming of the railroad the community was divided into almost equal parts known as North Hill and South Hill, and the name was changed from Fountain to Fountanett, later changed to Fontanet.

After the powder mill explosion on Oct. 16, 1907, the town was rebuilt, but the industry left, and the town declined rapidly.

REFERENCE  
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# Unions have long history in Terre Haute

During the winter of 1914, local 49 of the International Alliance of the Theatrical Stage Employees made an effort to organize the men then employed as motion picture machine operators in its jurisdiction.

Under the guidance and assistance of Local 49, an operators local was formed here in Terre Haute. On Jan. 13, 1915, it was issued an independent charter by the International Alliance of the Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Machine Operators, to be known as Local No. 373.

Charter members were Trans Brown, Walter Brown, R.R. Dempsey, Ross Harrison, Henry Hirt, L.A. Horning, L.O. Hurt, William Jarvis, H.M. Lindley, Harry Mayer, H.F. Prentice, L.G. Murry, Erwin Murry, W.D. Nesbit, William Prentice, Edward Pullen, R.L. Shaffer and B. Steinhauser. Oak Ruddell was the only living charter member in 1970.

Serving as the first elected officers were: Murry, president; Trans Brown, secretary; Nesbit, treasurer; and Harrison, business agent. He passed away in 1932.

By 1933 only four of the original 18 members held cards in Local 373. They included Dempsey, Steinhauser, Prentice and Lindley. The others had left the city or had withdrawn from the trade.

In 1921 the operators at Clinton were organized and became members of Local 373. In 1933 the members included: R.F. Bar-



## Historically Speaking

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The oldest organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor is the International Typographical Union, organized in 1852. The oldest union in Terre Haute is the Typographical Union No. 76. First organized in 1863, it has since been twice reorganized. The last time was in 1879, giving the union a continuous existence of 92 years.

Of the seven members granted a charter in 1879, four were still living in 1933.

W.C. "Brig" Schuman, who was the first superintendent of the Union Printer's Home in 1892, was living in Denver.

J.W. "Billy" Simpson was in Chicago where he had lived for many years. Leslie M. Priest, after living in St. Louis for many years, was also living in Chicago.

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James J. Moorhead, who became a doctor, was a surgeon at St. Anthony's Hospital after practicing medicine several years in Chicago. He was a native of Terre Haute.

The only member who was affiliated with all three organizations of printers, joining the first one in 1863, was Charles H. Goodwin.

In 1933 No. 76 had three members with 50 years continuous membership. They included: A.W. "Otto" Maison, the oldest; Frank T. "Fatty" Simpson, was a close second as both joined in 1882. Later in that year, O.S. "Ollie" McNabb deposited a traveling card.

Capt. A.C. Duddlestone, former editor of the Spectator, and Fred J. Piepenbrink, former business manager of city schools, were members of No. 76 at an early date. The union, in 1933, had a number of members who had been such continuously for 30 to 40 years.

With the consolidation of the newspapers before 1931, the union adopted the five-day week, which gave some work to all its members, although the depression and the consolidation divorced more than one-third of them from jobs. The five-day week has since been made universal by International Typographical Union.

Terre Haute printers have been more fortunate than most in the matter of wage reduction. The scale in 1933 was but \$1 a week less than in 1929. But the

five-day week reduced the earning capacity about \$9 per week.

Death had taken four of the members during the year 1933. George H. Hebb died at the age of 83 years; Thomas E. Needham, aged 69; Frank J. Weldele, aged 59 years; and Christopher H. Shaft, aged 87.

Someone should undertake the task of updating the statistics of the last 56 years (1933 to 1994) for both the Printer's Union and the Motion Picture Machine Operators.

This writer doesn't attend as many movies as she used to, but I would if certain rules were followed:

- Could the broken seats and those in need of upholstery be repaired?

- Could the 1 p.m. matinees be restored, for those who like to lunch and enjoy a movie, and come out blinking into daylight, to get home safely after any necessary shopping at the malls, etc.?

- I suppose it's too much to ask to have senior-citizen size bags of popcorn, and smaller soft drinks would be nice.

I'll still miss the man in the projectionist's booth who was always there to repair the film, or what ever it was he did in there.

No one asked me about all these changes, but if money spent on union workers, etc., is not being spent, why can't the public enjoy the big screen movies in comfort in theater surroundings?



## Valley heritage

MAR 13 1994

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Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATEVIGU UUN I CUBU D D D D D  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



# You've come a long way, baby

## Today, a woman in labor is not always having a child

Is DEC 22 1991

In 1840, women of New England had seven industries open to them if they wanted to work. They could keep boarders, set type, teach needlework, tend looms in cotton mills, or fold and stitch in book binderies. We can guess that the other two occupations would be marriage or street-walking.

Forty years later in the state of Massachusetts there were 284 occupations open to women instead of seven. Some 251,158 women were earning their living in these occupations, receiving from \$150 to \$3,000 every year. This estimate did not include amateurs, or mothers and daughters in the household, and excluded domestic service.

In the fall of 1885, representatives of some local trade unions met at Indianapolis and organized the Indiana Federation of Trade & Labor Union, later known as the State Federation of Labor, claimed to be the oldest state federation of labor in the United States.

This organization through its legislative council exerted steady pressure on the General Assembly and the political parties for the betterment of labor conditions generally.

In a substantial way, this organization corresponded to the State Agricultural Society, the State Medical Society, the State Bar Association, or the State Teachers' Association.

Some of their goals were to improve labor conditions, higher

### Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County Historian.

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pay, shorter hours, and safety on the job.

In 1881, a law was passed limiting a day's work in cotton and woolen factories to 10 hours for all persons under 18 years. In 1879 and 1881, the General Assembly provided for a mine inspector to examine scales, and to monitor that all laws governing mining passed in 1879 were carried out.

In 1897, this statute was broadened to include all manufacturing establishments. The same statute forbid employment of children under 14 years in such places.

About 1890 the Eastern states began to make and enforce their labor laws and factory acts. This drove cheap labor inland. At the same time, gas began to be used for fuel in Indiana factories.

Because Indiana is located at the meeting point of the fuel and raw materials for many industries, this caused a great movement of fac-

ories into this state.

Hoosier legislators recognized the need for a comprehensive system of labor laws and needed statutes were added to the labor acts at regular intervals.

The advent of women into wage earning complicated the problem. Employment, sanitation and pay were the important elements as long as men only were concerned. Women added the questions of morals, overwork and racial effects. Questions raised by the employment of women in industry were raised since the Civil War.

Previous to that time, no factories hired women except a few cotton and woolen mills. In 1910, there were more than 20,000 women employed regularly as wage earners.

Readers must not believe that women had never previously performed any labor in Indiana. The pioneer woman did more work than any class of person in the state, but comparatively little of this was done until they were grown up.

Children were born before the woman's strength was wasted in the excessive toil of pioneer home life.

As a rule, women employed in factories were unmarried, and what the effect was to be on home life or on the children born afterward is just beginning to be known.

What was feared was the problem following the withdrawal

of 20,000 young women of the more ambitious class from the ordinary function of the home.

Most of the wage earners in 1918 were employed in textile mills, laundries, retail stores, teaching, and clerical work. Only a few employers in Indiana were so unresponsive to public opinion and common decency as to allow their desire for gain cause to impose on female employees.

At the end of World War I, department stores, offices, cotton and woolen mills, clothing factories, and laundries were as a rule equipped so that work was more attractive than ordinary housework.

Nevertheless, certain regulations governing sanitation, hours of labor, age, and equipment were legislated and enforced by the bureau of inspection.

The question of wages had not been settled then. It was conceded the average shop girl was underpaid, and this had been alleged as an inducement to vice.

The Progressive and Socialist parties of the day injected these questions into politics, much to the disgust of the professional politicians, who much preferred to discuss the tariff, the money question or our foreign policy.

Women have come a long way in the labor field since 1840, and even farther since the days of World War I. A woman in labor is not always having a baby in 1991!

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DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



# Coal mines flourished in 1800s

APR 10 1994

As early as 1870 (124 years ago), the State Board of Agriculture and Professor E.T. Cox, state geologist, planned a Clay County excursion the first week of April, to acquaint leading manufacturers and businessmen of Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states with the vast coal potential of Clay County.

Two trains of coaches were made available by the TH&I Railroad. Everything possible was provided to make the visit agreeable for the excursionists and the iron and coal men of Clay County.

The train left at 9:30 a.m., with four handsome coaches well-filled with leading business and professional men of the city and ran directly out to Mill Branch, a few rods east of Harmony, where the excursion train from Indianapolis was met.

This excursion train was made up of eight new coaches of the St. Louis, Vandalia & Terre Haute Railroad, painted a beautiful wine color, certainly the most elegant train that ever passed over any railroad.

The 12 coaches were linked together with a locomotive at each end, and the train began its tour of mines and iron furnaces in Clay County.

The first shaft east of Terre Haute was Perrin's, a little west of Seelyville. Here a four-foot vein of coal was found some 35 feet below the surface. Worked on a lease basis, the mine was at the end of a switch about a quar-



## Historically Speaking

By Dorothy Clark  
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ter mile long.

The next shaft was at Seelyville and leased to the Bigelow Coal Co. of Hannibal, Mo. Here a six-foot vein was worked at the depth of 100 feet.

At Staunton, 12 miles from Terre Haute, three shafts were being worked in 1870. The vein was 6 1/2 feet thick and 40 feet deep. Two railroad switches at this point ran one mile south and the other a quarter mile northeast. Two of the shafts were worked by Sommers and one by Bailey.

At Williams Station, one mile east of Staunton, were two mines shafts, one worked by Williams and one by Lundy. A short switch ran to the northwest from Williams Station.

At Newburg, 14 miles from Terre Haute, were two shafts with a seven-foot vein 40 feet below the surface. One was operated by Coleman & Co., and the other by Fawcner & Co. A switch ran north nearly one mile from Newburg.

The next station east of Newburg was Brazil where block coal was found, but not of the best quality. The Furnace Co. disposed of their own coal and procured their supply from the North Branch and from Harmony. This company had run a switch about a mile long north to their mine and had their own locomotive.

The TH&I Railroad Co. was building a switch south from Brazil in the direction of Centerpoint. It was to be several miles long and called the South Branch. This railroad switch would develop one of the best block coal fields in Indiana.

Mines in this area were Weaver & Davis' shaft mine about 3 miles from the main track, with a four-foot vein 42 feet deep. About a third of a mile farther along was Indiana Coal & Iron Co.; a slope mine; and then McClelland & Sons; Capt. Morris's mine; and finally Niblack's slope mine at the end of the track.

At Knightsville, the Indiana Coal & Iron Co. was working two shafts of furnace coal at a depth of 40 feet.

The so-called "Y" was about a mile east of Brazil. From this point, Masten's switch ran north about a mile and a half to the Otter Creek Coal Co., and Hasten's Furnace. Miners dug coal for a dollar a ton.

All the coal was consumed by the furnaces of the Western Iron Co., averaging 180 tons per day.

Mill Branch switch left the main track about a quarter of a mile east of Harmony and ran north a mile to the Planet Furnace, and then northwest a mile and a half to the Star Mine Shafts, of the Indianapolis Rolling Mill Co.

A.O. Hough was mine superintendent. Two seams of excellent block coal, the upper four feet thick, 38 feet deep; the lower 5 1/2 feet thick and 60 feet from the surface, were taken from the Star Mines, averaging 100 tons per day.

Harmony, eastern limit of the coal field, was a wild and woolly town in 1870. A trading point of about 300 souls, Harmony probably had more mud and fewer sidewalks than any other village in the county. There were four drygoods stores, two drugstores, five groceries, one bakery, four saloons, and one pottery, all doing a fair business.

Some of the best block coal in Clay County was found south of Harmony. D.N. Barnett's slope mine was two miles south. Analyzed by Professor Cox, this coal was pronounced the purest he had ever found.

A four-foot vein was on top of a second layer two feet thick, separated by slate. Barnett paid 90 cents for mining, and 90 cents for hauling to the railroad cars. He mined nearly 10,000 tons in 1869. Southeast of Barnett's were several small mines.